

CHAPTER 387

AN ACT requiring automatic enrollment into utility bill payment assistance programs for certain individuals and households and supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.48:2-29.60 Automatic enrollment into utility bill payment assistance for certain eligible individuals, households.

1. a. For the purposes of P.L.2025, c.387 (C.48:2-29.60), “ongoing assistance” means assistance, including monetary assistance, provided to recipients of a needs-based public assistance program that does not expire upon reaching a pre-determined total amount of assistance received or pre-determined total time period during which assistance was received. “Ongoing assistance” shall include utility shutoff prevention provided pursuant to the Winter Termination Program and Summer Termination Program.

b. The Department of Human Services shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Community Affairs, the Board of Public Utilities, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients. The memorandum of understanding shall require the Department of Human Services to provide information to the Department of Community Affairs, the Board of Public Utilities, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients concerning recipients of or households eligible for any of the following needs-based public assistance programs:

(1) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families pursuant to Pub.L.104-193 (42 U.S.C. s.601 et seq.);

(2) Work First New Jersey pursuant to P.L.1997, c.38 (C.44:10-55 et seq.);

(3) the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program pursuant to the federal "Food and Nutrition Act of 2008," Pub.L.88-525 (7 U.S.C. s.2011 et seq.);

(4) the supplemental security income program pursuant to the federal Social Security Act, Pub.L.92-603 (42 U.S.C. s.1381 et seq.); and

(5) any other State or federal needs-based public assistance program, as provided for in a memorandum of understanding required to be entered into pursuant to this subsection.

The information provided by the Department of Human Services shall include information necessary to enroll those recipients of or households eligible for a needs-based public assistance program listed in this subsection into any utility bill payment assistance program administered by the Department of Community Affairs, the Board of Public Utilities, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients.

c. The Department of Community Affairs, the Board of Public Utilities, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients shall review the eligibility criteria and recipient data for any needs-based public assistance program administered by the respective agency to identify the information necessary to enroll those recipients of needs-based public assistance programs into any utility bill payment assistance program listed in subsection d. of this section.

d. Notwithstanding any State law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, and only to the extent permitted by federal law, a memorandum of understanding entered into pursuant to subsection b. of this section shall further require the Department of Community Affairs, the Board of Public Utilities, or any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients to, based on the information received

from the Department of Human Services, and the review conducted pursuant to subsection c. of this section, automatically enroll eligible households into the following utility bill payment assistance programs that the State agency administers:

(1) the "Universal Service Fund," established pursuant to section 12 of P.L.1999, c.23 (C.48:3-60);

(2) the Winter Termination Program codified pursuant to P.L.2021, c.317 (C.40A:5A-28 et al.);

(3) the Summer Termination Program established pursuant to P.L.2025, c.145 (C.40A:5A-31 et al.); and

(4) any other State utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients. A State agency shall not automatically enroll a household into a utility bill payment assistance program that provides a one-time grant or other limited-use assistance.

2. The Department of Community Affairs, Board of Public Utilities, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients shall, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), promulgate rules and regulations, as necessary, to effectuate the provisions of P.L.2025, c.387 (C.48:2-29.60).

3. This act shall take effect on the first day of the sixth month next following enactment, except that the Department of Human Services, Department of Community Affairs, Board of Public Utilities, and any other State agency that administers a utility bill payment assistance program that provides ongoing assistance to recipients may take action to enter into a memorandum of understanding as required by section 1 of P.L.2025, c.387 (C.48:2-29.60) and to establish rules and regulations in advance of the effective date as necessary.

Approved January 20, 2026.